

## **Negotiating the Incorporation of Multimodal Materials in Literacy Learning: Some Observations in One Secondary School in Uganda**

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### **Abstract**

The work from which this paper is developed is part of my PhD thesis, titled “Exploring the challenges and possibilities of using learner centred pedagogy to teach literacy in secondary education in Uganda: a case study<sup>1</sup>”. Research on classroom practices in countries where literacy levels are highest suggests that classroom strategies that encourage the use of learner centred pedagogy can enhance literacy skills among the youth. Learner centred classroom strategies involve the use of multimodal learning activities and materials. Some of these teaching strategies have been introduced into policy in many educational contexts in sub-Saharan Africa, but literature shows that their implementation is dogged with multiple challenges. The case study research design I employed for this study allowed for the use of multiple methods of data collection which included semi-structured interviews, documentary evidence, and semi-structured lesson observations. Drawing on my experience as a teacher of literacy in Uganda and utilising the flexibility of my position as a semi-participant researcher, I was able to incorporate some multimodal materials and activities within the interview and lesson observation sessions with learners and teachers. This tributary approach to my study enhanced the process of data collection and enriched the data in several ways, as it encouraged a deeper rapport with the participants. In this paper, I share the process of incorporating multimodality and the perceived perceptions of and responses to these extra materials and their benefits.

*Keywords:* learner centred pedagogy, multimodality, collaboration, Uganda

### **Introduction**

The paper is taken from my doctoral research experience and it presents the integration of multimodal materials and activities in just one class out of the six that

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<sup>1</sup> I have submitted a soft copy of my thesis and my viva is due mid-October. In this paper I use extracts data that I used in the thesis.

were observed during data collection. The research entitled ‘Exploring the challenges and possibilities of using learner centred pedagogy to teach literacy in secondary education in Uganda: a case study’ was carried out in Uganda in one secondary school called Bakira Senior School (pseudonym). Literacy teaching at the secondary school in Uganda is associated with the teaching of English language and Literature in English. Hence the study focussed on teachers of English and Literature in English and their lessons. Literature in English, the particular focus of this paper, is mainly taught to complement the teaching of English language which is not only the official language of Uganda, but is also the language of instruction in most of the education sectors in the country. Literature in English is an optional subject in secondary schools in Uganda and it is taught in a few schools. English is a second language to learners and its performance at national examinations is usually very weak. In addition, the reading environment in Uganda has been described as disabling because of the low interest in reading and the limited reading materials (Jönsson & Olsson, 2008). Communication in Uganda is culturally considered to lean more towards the oral rather than literary (Moody, 1971). Literacy levels among students in lower secondary education in Uganda are low with a proficiency of 48.3% (UNEB, 2012). Taken together, these factors raise the need to explore the various classroom practices that can enhance literacy levels such as multimodality and learner centred pedagogy. Hence, the study sought to explore how different interactive teaching strategies under the umbrella of learner centred pedagogy were implemented by teachers of literacy plus the challenges and possibilities they faced. Learner centred pedagogy is recommended by the revised Uganda secondary school national curriculum (NCDC, 2008).

Multimodality is a type of communication that involves different medium such as images, gestures, animation and spoken and written language. The theoretical assumptions underlying multimodality are: multiple modes of communication contribute to meaning; and modes of communication are socially constructed in a given community (Jewitt, 2009). Multimodality has increasingly attracted attention in education and other disciplines in general as a means of research, teaching or social change. In multimodal research a variety of materials and methods are employed in the process of data collection (Bauman, 2000; Jewitt, 2009). Multimodality is greatly

interlinked with the use of technology in research. For example, in education, video has been highly integrated in research as a means of providing lenses through which schools, classrooms and instructional materials can be observed and this provides fresh ways of viewing familiar and unfamiliar context (Jewitt, 2009; McKenny & Reeves, 2012). In this paper however I wish to depart from the use of technology to record events during research and share my experiences of using multimodal materials mainly crafted from common resources such as paper media to enhance the process of data collection and to add value to the data. In developing countries such as Uganda, paper media is still the most common media of communication in educational contexts. For instance, in Uganda, examinations, communication within the school and classroom support materials are usually in print form rather than e-resources. Although technology, especially in form of the internet, computers and photocopiers has been introduced in some schools in Uganda, it is yet to be widely integrated into classroom practice (Kyeyune, 2011). The current submission describes how multimodal theoretical lenses informed my design of research materials specifically in the arena of literacy teaching in Uganda. I present the process of integrating multimodal literacy materials during interviews and lesson observations in one particular secondary school literacy class reading the novel *The First Daughter* by Goretty Kyomuhendo. In the last part of the paper I show some of the observed challenges and possibilities of using these materials in the process of data collection.

### **1. Multimodal literacy**

Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) argue that the study of literacy includes not only the written text but also other modes of communication that a text may present. These modes of communication could include images, animations, sounds, music, gestures and movement. All modes of communication in a text are crucial in contributing to the meaning in the text and a reader is expected to respond appropriately to them. Thus literacy involves reading, producing, responding, analysing and interacting with different modes of communication in addition to written words (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996; Pahl & Rowsell, 2012). Advocates for multimodal literacy argue that for a person to be literate they need to have the ability to read and create a range of texts either manually or electronically (Albers, & Harste, 2007; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011; Miller, 2007; Walsh, 2008). Literacy then requires

learners to apply different competences in different communication contexts. For example, digital literacy could mean using the cell phone to send, receive and forward messages enriched with visual and sound effects and the ability to programme the phone to suit other purposes in addition to receiving and making calls. This requires “using signs, signals, codes, graphic images” for one to communicate through diverse ways especially in the modern world (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011, p. 21). Such practices of literacy present several classroom implications for both the teacher and the learner. The teacher could prepare classroom materials that are multimodal because many learners, especially in secondary schools, are well advanced in the use of different media of communication (Albers & Harste, 2007; Pahl & Rowsell, 2012; Sanders & Walsh, 2010).

Some studies show that multimodal literacy can enhance the teaching and learning of Literature (Lewis & Wray, 2000; Pahl & Rowsell, 2012; Whitin, 1996; Walsh, 2008). For instance Whitin (1996) reports that creating visual representations about Literature by a group of seventh graders “provided opportunities to generate new meanings, and to create new signs or symbols collaboratively through conversations... [and] opportunities for critical thinking that complemented the expressive dimensions of written and oral language” (p. 131). Collaboration and critical thinking are key skills that can enhance cognition through learner centred pedagogy as shown below. Murray (2009) however, argues that images in Literature teaching are sometimes considered secondary to the printed word and explanations are rarely given how learners connect cognitively to images. In this paper, multimodal literacy is regarded as an integrated approach to studying literature whereby different media are brought together to generate meaning about a text.

Multimodal literacy lies comfortably within the theoretical perspectives and models of teaching that informed my understanding of learner centred pedagogy, that is: the way teachers and students interact through social processes and available resources in their specific school and classroom contexts to foster learning. Sociocultural theory as advanced by Vygotsky offers that “human learning presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which children grow into intellectual life of those around them” (1978, p. 88). Social nature is propagated by continued collaboration between experts or knowledgeable peers and students.

Collaboration is supported by the use of multimodal materials that enable learners to critique and respond to texts through imaginative ways. Classroom talk is one of the tools that are widely commended as a means of sustaining interaction in a social nature during lessons (Alexander, 2008; Littleton & Mercer, 2013; Resnick, 1999). In addition, artefacts such as classroom instructional materials also support interaction and cognitive development (Alexander, 2008; Tudge, 1998; Vygotsky, 1978; Yandell, 2012). In relation to the teaching of reading, multimodal materials such as different modes of images, movement, objects, colour and gesture can enhance students' metacognitive development (Sanders & Albers, 2010; Walsh, 2010; Wray & Lewis, 2000). Wray and Lewis (2000) for instance propose that showing students a clip of a video that relates to a text being read can lead to other activities such as discussion and note-making and more still it "heightens pupils' metacognitive awareness by making them explicitly aware that learning is not a passive process. A learner is constantly making links between what they are seeing/reading/hearing and what they already know" (Lewis & Wray, 2000, p. 33).

## **2. The Study**

Bakira Senior School was purposively selected because unlike most secondary schools in Uganda they teach Literature in English in all the six classes (Paton, 2002; Stake, 1995). The school is aided by the government of Uganda and this helps to minimize teacher mobility while at the same time ensuring that national educational policies are likely to be adopted. In addition, Bakira Senior School had extensive partnerships with some donor partners many of whom contributed reading materials to the school which was key factor in my research. The study required several visits to observe different literacy lessons and to hold interviews with teachers and learners, hence the school was selected because as an urban school it was highly accessible since lessons were observed on a regular basis.

Interactive teaching in general and multimodal literacy in particular presuppose that the study of literacy practices is a social undertaking that needs to be done in an authentic naturalistic setting (Street, 1998). This study was anchored in an interpretivist research approach specifically on the case study methodology hence the use of multiple methods namely: lesson and library observation; different sets of interviews and documentary evidence (Bryman, 2012; Denscombe, 2007; Gray, 2014;

Stake, 1995; Thomas, 2011; Yin, 2014). Simons (2009) defines case study as “an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme or system in a ‘real life’ context. It is research-based, inclusive of different methods and is evidence-led” (p. 21). This definition suggests that the case study design views research as a multifaceted activity that needs to be explored from different angles such as teachers’ perceptions of the use of multimodal materials to teach literacy and the learners’ experiences in literacy lessons where such materials are used. Secondly, case study research emphasises the importance of research in a “real life” or natural setting, which was also a requirement of my study since the reviewed literature in section two above highlights the significance the sociocultural context in enhancing cognitive development. Thus the choice of a school setting where teachers’, learners’ and other participants’ activities could be explored in a naturalistic manner as part of a social setting (Denscombe, 2007; Stake, 1995; Thomas, 2011; Yin, 2014). Thirdly, case study design encourages use of multiple research methods which was useful for my study because it was necessary to use different methods such as observation, interviews and documentary evidence to accommodate all the different sources of data such as the teachers, learners, classroom setting and the libraries. The illustrations presented in this paper are taken from larger sets of data where six teachers and six groups of learners were interviewed and lessons of literacy were observed to address my research questions in regard to the use of learner centred pedagogy to teach literacy at secondary school level. Each teacher read a different text in their class; hence I have chosen to present the case of one teacher and her class in this paper to observe a particular level of consistency.

Ruth (pseudonym), the teacher whose case I present here, had teaching experience of seven years. She was teaching a Senior Two (average age 13) Literature in English class of 130 students at the time of data collection. She was teaching the novel *The First Daughter* and I observed seven of her lessons before holding a group interview with some of her learners. Ruth had one lesson of 80 minutes per week with her class and she was required to teach the book within one school term of approximately 10 weeks. Sometimes she created extra time to read the book by using the English language lessons. Before I started observing her lessons I held an

interview with Ruth for one and half hours to establish her perceptions of learner centred pedagogy and multimodal literacy in general (Gillham, 2003; Gray, 2014; Wengraf, 2006). After each lesson I held brief interviews or discussions with the teacher to discuss aspects of the lesson such as the choice of teaching strategies and the learners' responses. I worked with Ruth to identify learners for the group interviews and like their teacher they read and signed informed consent forms.

*The First Daughter* (1996) is a novel by the Ugandan writer Goretti Kyomuhendo, which celebrates the power of a woman who beats all the odds to become very successful in a male dominated arena. Kasemiire the main character is a village beauty who, despite her good grades and roles of responsibility in secondary school gets pregnant and ends up homeless when her no-nonsense father called Kyamanywa throws her and her mother out of his home. A kind hearted lady called Mrs Mutyaba takes Kasemiire to Kampala to work in her home but she faces more challenges when both Mr Mutyaba and his son Michael make sexual advances towards her. She escapes and ends up with Catholic nuns who support her to complete school until she joins university. Later Kasemiire reconciles with Steven the father of her son and although she loses her mother she leads a fulfilling life. The novel has a lot of lessons to offer to a Senior Two class in Uganda. For example, it has strong feminist messages for the reader although the class presented here mainly focussed on themes such as poverty, unity, cultural practices, the dangers of promiscuity and so on.

Ruth organised the learners into groups before they started to read the novel in class. Each group chose a name and they came up with names such as "The Avengers", "The Rivals", "The Great Readers", "The Illuminate", "The Sparks", "Hotspur Galaxies" and "Arc's" and each group consisted of between 17 to 20 learners. Ruth assigned a chapter from the novel to each group to read and discuss or present on the following: the storyline, the themes, the characters and their traits and the moral lessons. During the lesson learners were asked to sit in their groups and the presenting group of the day would send at least three members to the front of the class to summarise the chapter/story and talk about the characters and the themes. The members at the front of the class took turns to present different parts of the assignment. Ruth often stopped them to encourage the rest of the class to ask

questions of any member of the group and called upon those members not at the front to support the presenters. Furthermore, each group had a leader who was required to keep his/her members in order. It was usually clear that the presenters had read the assigned chapters as they sometimes read from the book to illustrate their assertions. However, they also seemed to be retelling the events as they happened in the novel without much analysis. The teacher often asked some questions prompting further probing of the learners' knowledge of the novel. Although there seemed to be a high degree of engagement with the text by the learners especially the ones who presented before the class, the class was large with approximately 130 learners. This meant that there were a number of learners whose role was just to listen to the presenters during the lesson. The discussions and the presentations seemed to supersede other literacy skills such as actual reading of the novel and writing.

### **3. Negotiating the incorporation of multimodality**

Ruth, as described in the lesson contexts above clearly made effort to involve learners by making them take charge of the learning process to a certain extent. However, the activities involved fewer learners out of the large class of 130. I sought to establish whether it was possible to have more learners interacting with the novel during the lesson if additional materials and activities were devised. At this point I relied on my personal prior experience as a secondary school teacher of Literature in English and as a teacher trainer to incorporate these materials as part of my research tools. As part of my experience I was familiar with the novel being taught because I had not only studied it but I had also taught it at various levels of education in Uganda. With the aim of enhancing participation I negotiated the use of pictures, diagrams and charts during the lessons and during my interviews with learners. My decision was informed by the desire to enrich the data and the data collection process beyond the typical forms of data collection. Also, this decision was informed by what I had observed during the literacy lessons (especially the fact that some learners were very eager to be part of the lessons) and what I considered to be my role as a researcher/teacher/teacher educator.

#### **3.1 The Process of Using Interactional tools: Interviews and Lesson Observation**



The materials and activities were introduced at different points and through various processes. During my post-lesson observation interviews with Ruth, we often discussed the perceived challenges and alternative approaches to these challenges. I then designed some tools that I shared with Ruth to ascertain whether she deemed them appropriate for me to use when I held interviews with her learners. Ruth chose to incorporate some of these in her lessons and hence I was able to observe learners' responses to the same while the other materials were used during the interviews. Here I present just two of the activities and materials that were used to support the teaching of character/characterisation and setting.

Firstly, character and characterisation were some of the key aspects of the novel that Ruth emphasised in her class. She often asked learners to make outlines about the characters and presenters had to describe the different traits about each character they discussed. Hence, pictures of people who appeared to have similar traits to the characters were used. For the character of Kyamanywa, Kasemiire's father, I downloaded two pictures of farmers, one seemingly of a healthy and successful man against the background of a thriving maize plantation and the other showing an old and tired farmer against the background of a dry and empty farmland. Ruth gave the learners the pictures during one of the lessons and in their groups asked them to: "Study the two pictures of Kyamanywa and outline what each picture tells you about his character". Each picture had space below it where they would write their responses. At the end of the lesson the pictures were returned and below are two examples from two groups:

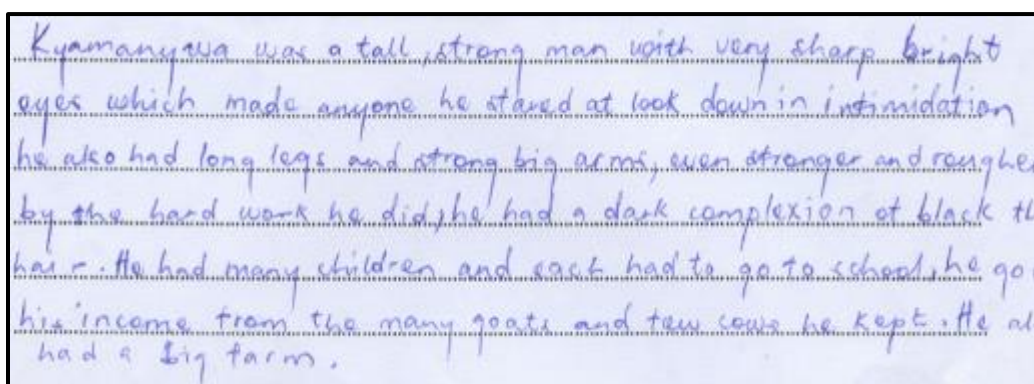


Figure 1: Response to Kyamanywa's picture by The Rivals group

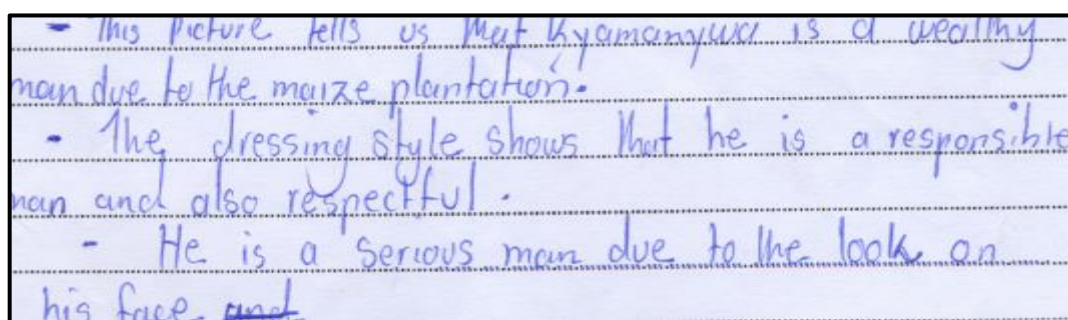


Figure 2: Response to Kyamanywa's picture by The Great Readers group

The Rivals group took their response verbatim from what was written in the novel *The First Daughter* while the Great Readers group seemed to observe a particular framework when making their analysis. The learners' response seems to focus on the characters' physical appearance, but they make associations between the picture and the novel and their background knowledge about farmers in Uganda and also associations within the picture itself. In the process, some of the personality traits of the characters such as being responsible and respectful are highlighted in this brief presentation. Table 1.1 below shows a breakdown of their analysis:

Table 1.1

Analysis of The Great Readers' Group Response

Claim	Evidence	Probable argument
He is wealthy	Maize plantation	Means of livelihood, (many people in Uganda live off the land)
Responsible and respectful	Style of dressing	For a farmer in Uganda the character in the picture appears decent
Serious	Facial expression	Perhaps they were using knowledge from reading the novel

During the group interviews, learners were asked again to discuss briefly whether the pictures enhanced their understanding of the characters. A picture reflecting the character of Steven was also used during this session and the two sets of exchanges below are a snapshot of how they talked about the pictures:

*Discussing Steven's picture*

**Learner A:** But did Steven have a phone in the novel?

**Learner B:** He was even still a student like us how come he is dressed like that?

**Learner C:** Maybe this is after he started working.

**Learner A:** Actually he was working and he had money when he saw Kasemiire again but still they didn't say that he had a phone.

**Learner D:** All the same he used to stay in the village, but that house [pause]...

*Discussing Kyamanywa's picture*

**Learner A:** That is the real Kyamanywa, the man was tough.

**Learner B:** But look at his clothes [silence]

**Learner C:** What about them?

**Learner D:** Yes they look different.

**Learner C:** How?

**Learner B:** He was a simple farmer in the village, but see what he is wearing.

**Learner D:** He was successful at the beginning of the novel, look even at his farm.

**Learner B:** Yes but he had a few animals and I do not think he could afford to dress like that.

Different levels of understanding the pictures in relation to the text were visible in these brief exchanges. For example, learners were able to generate remarks about the characters based on the pictures and earlier knowledge about the texts, that is, whether rich or poor, their backgrounds (village) and more still some were able to

talk about the story development when they mentioned that: (a) Steven was a learner but later got job and (b) Kyamanywa's fortune changed at a certain point in the novel. Learner B in the first conversation perhaps had not yet read the entire book and she got fillers from her group members. In addition, they related Steven to themselves as learners and also identified with other aspects such as the type of house that Steven was expected to live in. The examples above reveal that the images helped learners to talk collaboratively about the texts and provoked them further to consider the possible ways that their readings of the characters could be different. Some learners seemed to dismiss the pictures on the basis of disparities such as owning a phone or dressing differently yet it is these very differences that perhaps guided other learners to recall some of the events in the book.

On her part, Ruth said that the learners "talked" more than before about the novel which could be an indication of interactive dialogue about content. However, she also expressed concern about the time learners seemed to consume "talking" about the pictures instead of moving on to discuss different chapters of the book, and as a result content coverage was affected. Earlier during an initial interview with Ruth, she had expressed the danger of losing classroom control as learners engaged in discussions especially in large classes. Hence although learners may have shown interest, the larger context concerns have to be taken into consideration before new ideas can be wholly appreciated.

Secondly, Ruth emphasised setting and story development when teaching the novel *The First Daughter*. Kasemiire, the main character is seen moving from a poor rural home to different settings both in urban and rural area. Basing on the assumption that understanding different settings in the novel can enhance learners' appreciation of the story as they take mark of the different people the character interacts with, I discussed with Ruth the possibility of requesting learners to develop their own drawings of the different places that Kasemiire calls home in the novel. Drawing of images usually involves some critical and creative thinking about the text even if it is just to draw an impression of a character (Lewis & Wray, 2000). Again in their groups, learners were asked to "use the provided hard paper to draw a sketch of Kyamanywa's homestead and Kasemiire's home by the end of the novel." Ruth asked

the learners to return the sketches after one week and Figure 3 below shows one of the sketches:



*Figure 3: Learners' sketch of Kasemiire's homes by the Hotspur Galaxies Group*

The groups had great variations in their portrayals of the different homes. The Hotspur Galaxies group as shown in the Figure 1.3 above, portrayed Kasemiire's transitions from relative wealth to poverty and finally to riches through sketches of three homesteads. The first home in the diagram, though a hut is a picture of a well-kept home with the hut being kept intact. Using the measures of a typical village home described in the novel, the hut belongs to a wealthy man. The hut in the middle is clearly falling apart with over-grown grass which almost goes to the doorstep. The third home in Figure 3 is shown as a modern house (again using the standards of the

novel) with clear angles which could be interpreted as a sign of neatness. Some groups sketched two homes instead of three to portray a transition from poverty to wealth. Despite the variations, the sketches showed that learners dedicated time and effort to the work assigned to them. It was not easy to establish whether all the group members had participated in the drawings but during the group interview they said that they had worked together with “some giving suggestions, others shading, while different people drew the pictures”. The learners seemed to rely on their prior knowledge of different homesteads in Uganda the context of the novel. For example, the Hotspur Galaxies group above captured a typical rural setting right to the banana plantations that are usually grown around many rural homesteads in some parts of Uganda. It could be argued that by working together in their groups the learners were able to reinforce their understanding of the written text through their own visual interpretations.

#### **4. Discussion: Perceived Benefits and Challenges of Using Multimodal Methods to Collect Data**

##### **4.1 Benefits**

The materials and activities helped me to observe increased participation and they fostered partnerships: (a) among learners as team leaders/facilitators (b) between teachers and learners and (c) between the researcher and the participants. These two aspects, participation and partnerships, were very crucial to my understanding of learner centred pedagogy as pointed out earlier in this paper. As a researcher, I was able to probe further than what the teachers told me during interviews to confirm the challenges and possibilities of using these extra materials in their lessons. Additionally, I was able to observe participants interact actively as they made comments about the multimodal learning materials in a deeper manner. The findings complement the arguments that support the use of multimodality in literacy learning (Albers & Harste, 2007; Walsh, 2010). Like Whitin (1996) found with her group of seventh graders, learners in the current study were able to make new connections and enrich their understanding of texts.

The integration of these materials as part of my data collection tools allowed for multiple lenses to the research context. For instance, learners were able to think

together (Littleton & Mercer, 2013) and give their personal views that would otherwise not have featured in “normal/usual” sources of data collection whereby they would have responded to questions regarding literacy learning without specifically focussing on texts that they were reading. Hence, they were part of knowledge production about their social setting and this could lead to cognitive development as proposed by the concept of collaboration (Alexander, 2008; Resnick, 1999; Vygotsky, 1978).

Using learners’ drawings and responses in my thesis adds to the variety, validity and authenticity of the findings of my report. It also gives a record of multimodal acts among the participants while at the same time showing how they make meaning in their specific contexts.

## **4.2 Challenges**

The study, as is usually the case with PhD studies was carried out within a limited period of time (one school term). The time was not quite adequate for both teachers and learners to interact extensively with the multimodal materials and provide detailed feedback. Some of the multimodal materials were given as assignments and hence unlike the learners that Yandell (2012) observed in his study it was difficult to monitor how learners interacted with them outside the classrooms.

The preparation of these materials consumed a lot of time especially against the backdrop of the fact that the researcher had to continue with the weekly schedules of lesson observations across different classes. For the integration of the extra materials to be effective, the researcher has to commit extra time to the preparation process while at the same time taking into consideration that the participants may not find the materials suitable for their contexts. For example, some groups from the class I present here were not able to provide feedback while others said the pictures did not relate quite well to what they read in the novel. The researcher has to be ready to adjust some aspects depending on the responses of the participants. Although most of the participants showed interest in the materials and there was clear evidence of increased engagement with and analysis of the novel using the materials, it is not easy to know how much traction the perceived benefits could have beyond the research period.

## Conclusion

Despite the challenges, consideration has to be made for the fact that multimodality in this research was used concurrently with other learner centred strategies such as drama, group discussions and role play. Multimodality practices such as the study and drawing of images were introduced at different points of reading the text and this required continuous negotiation and flexibility rather than singular focus on one approach. To a great extent, learners' efforts to create and respond to images showed potential for studying texts in a collaborative and communal manner as opposed to individual reading. According to Lankshear and Knobel (2011) and Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996), this is a hallmark of good practice in education because it indicates that classroom interaction is a real possibility.

Having acquired a sense of the possibility of how multimodality can be incorporated in literacy learning, the next step should then be to find ways of supporting both teachers and learners to practice it on a regular basis. In addition to providing alternative ways of talking about the novel *The First Daughter*, for both teachers and learners, multimodality encouraged the generation of some materials that can be re-used with a new set of learners as templates that are adjustable for more creations. Given the scarcity of learning materials in some schools in Uganda, sharing the visual images with different classes would minimise expenditure on classroom materials. In addition, the symbolic representations made by learners, such as the depiction of typical households in Uganda, indicate shared contextual experiences that many of them can respond to. This suggests that the process of collaboration can still be negotiated with different learners.

Finally, it is important to reflect on how incorporating multimodal materials in my research impacted on my role as a researcher. By all means, the process of suggesting and introducing the concept of multimodality to the teachers and eventually the learners implied that I also had to renegotiate my position as a researcher. While keeping within the boundaries of a semi observer and interviewer



my role was mainly to probe more deeply during interviews to ascertain participants' perceptions of the multimodal materials. My research provides a complementary approach to data collection, which enhances authenticity of data because real-time issues in the research context with regard to the content being taught are integrated within the questions asked during interviews. This approach allows the researcher to observe how participants socially construct knowledge using alternative but relevant artefacts that are readily available to the participants. There is a possibility that the materials were beneficial in improving teachers' and learners' classroom practices at the time of the study because they responded positively to them. In all, I am optimistic that more researchers on literacy can find value in adopting multimodality as part of their methodology.

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